

writers who deserve often the highest praise, both of judgment and industry, and may expect at least to be mentioned with honour by me, whom they have freed from the greatest part of a very laborious work, and on whom they have imposed, at worst, only the easy task of rejecting superfluities.

By tracing in this manner every word to its original, and not admitting, but with great caution, any of which no original can be found, we shall secure our language from being over-run with *cant*, from being crouded with low terms, the spawn of folly or affectation, which arise from no just principles of speech, and of which therefore no legitimate derivation can be shewn.

WHEN the etymology is thus adjusted, the ANALOGY of our language is next to be considered; when we have discovered whence our words are derived, we are to examine by what rules they are governed, and how they are inflected through their various terminations. The terminations of the English are few, but those few have hitherto remained unregarded by the writers of our dictionaries. Our substantives are declined only by the plural termination, our adjectives admit no variation but in the degrees of comparison, and our verbs are conjugated by auxiliary words, and are only changed in the preter tense.

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To our language may be with great justice applied the observation of *Quintilian*, that speech is not formed by an analogy sent from heaven, but descends to us in a state of uniformity of perfection, but was produced by necessity and by accident, and is therefore composed of different parts, thrown together by negligence, by affectation, by learning, or by ignorance.

Our inflections therefore are by no means perfect, but admit of numberless irregularities, which in a dictionary will be diligently noted. Thus *fox* in the plural *foxes*, but *ox* makes *oxen*. *Sheep* is the same in both numbers. Adjectives are sometimes compared by changing the last syllable, as *proud*, *proudest*; and sometimes by particles prefixed, as *ambitious*, *more ambitious*, *most ambitious*. The preter tense of our verbs is subject to great variety; some are regular in the preter tense in *ed*, as *I love*, *I loved*, *I have loved*, which may be called the regular form, and is followed by most of our verbs of southern original. But many depart from this rule, without agreeing in any one form, as *I shake*, *I shook*, *I have shaken*; or *I shook* as it is sometimes written in poetry; *I make*, *I made*, *I have made*; *I bring*, *I brought*; *I wring*, *I wrung*, and many others, which, as they cannot be reduced to any one rule, must be learned from the dictionary rather than from grammar.

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